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ABSTRACT

Project CHIME (Children with Hearing Impairments in Mainstreamed Environments) develops and implements strategies that promote effective preschool mainstreaming of selected hearing-impaired children, ages 2-5 in Nassau County, New York. Written for parents of preschool children with hearing impairments, this handbook contains background information on mainstreaming, hearing loss, and the Project CHIME program. Project CHIME emphasizes an auditory/oral approach to teaching communication, and encourages children to use residual hearing, hearing aids, and auditory trainers to develop their hearing and oral speech. Project CHIME also emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming in the preschool environment to allow children with hearing loss to develop relationships with their hearing peers. The handbook covers such topics as parent involvement and training, role of CHIME staff, types of hearing loss, and use of hearing aids and auditory trainers. (JDD)

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PROJECT CHIME

HANDBOOK

FOR

PARENTS

DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
Program for the Hearing Impaired

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PROJECT CHIME

HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

As a parent of a young child with a hearing loss, you soon discover that there are many methods of teaching communication to the hearing impaired. However, Nassau BOCES Program for the Hearing Impaired and its Project CHIME believe in a method that is known as the auditory/oral approach. Through this method, children with hearing losses are encouraged to use their residual hearing, hearing aids, and a device known as an auditory trainer to develop the ability to use the normal communication channels of hearing and oral speech.

It is most important for young children with hearing loss to develop relationships with their hearing peers. Whenever possible, Nassau BOCES believes in mainstreaming some preschool children for at least part of their school experience. Mainstreaming is the placement of a child with special needs in a regular education classroom whether it be on the preschool or school-aged level. To create mainstreaming opportunities that benefit the hearing impaired preschool child, Nassau BOCES developed Project CHIME through a federal grant.

To understand the importance of mainstreaming, it should be considered in light of the growth of the total child. Your hearing-impaired child will eventually have to function in the hearing world, and mainstreaming will help develop the abilty to live in that world.

Starting at the preschool level, those hearing-impaired children who possess the specific skills that enable them to be successfully mainstreamed can enjoy the same experiences as their non-handicapped peers. They can react to the same speech and language stimulii, and they can develop the ability to socially interact with their peers, an important skill for all young children.

This handbook was prepared for you as a parent of a preschool child with hearing loss who is participating in the Project CHIME mainstreaming experience. It contains background information about mainstreaming, hearing loss, and the Project CHIME program.

MAINSTREAMING

What Parents Should Know About It...

Mainstreaming is defined as the integration of children with special needs into the regular school classroom. Children with handicaps attend school with their non-handicapped peers. They learn in the regular school environment, and educators believe that wherever possible, children with handicaps should be in this environment.

The mainstreamed hearing-impaired child learns with children who have normal hearing and he or she is exposed to normal speech, language and behavior patterns. However, mainstreaming involves more than just placing a child in a regular classroom. It requires an assistance from professionals who are trained to teach the hearing impaired so that the student can learn, perform, and interact as normally as possible.

Using Normal Communication Skills...

Hearing-impaired children, who learn early that they are expected to use normal communication skills, internalize the process required. Mainstreaming them helps in this internalization because they participate in patterns and conditions of the normal educational process.

The children who are considered for mainstreaming in the Project CHIME model have been trained in the auditory/oral approach. This means that a student already uses residual hearing, wears a hearing aid, and communicates using oral speech. It is important for parents to realize that not all hearing-impaired children have these capabilities; nor will all auditory children be able to function well in the mainstreaming environment. Parents and educators must be realistic and careful in seeking the most appropriate placement for each child.

The Mainstreaming Process...

Remember, mainstreaming is not a goal but a process that involves the student, his or her family, and professionals who use all available resources to enrich the learning process for the hearing impaired.

Who Should Participate in Mainstreaming...

A hearing-impaired child's loss may range from mild to profound. While it might be assumed that the child's degree of hearing ability would be the criteria for success in the mainstream, many children with profound losses have enjoyed successful experiences in regular classrooms.

Although the degree of loss is a factor, it is just one in a long list of considerations that must be addressed when deciding if a mainstreaming experience will be beneficial for an individual child. Other key factors are

a. the age of the child at the onset of loss
b. consistent use of hearing aids
c. maximum use of residual hearing
d. intelligible speech

e. levels of expressive and receptive language ability
f. cognitive ability
g. appropriate school behavior and self-help
h. social and emotional adjustment

There are some additional factors that should be considered when making decisions about school placement and the continued need for a maintstreamed setting. They include

a. the support that parents give
b. supportive services at the mainstream site
c. interschool communication
d. physical characteristics of the mainstream environment

PROJECT CHIME

What is CHIME...

Project CHIME (Children with Hearing Impairments in Mainstreamed Environments) was created by the Nassau BOCES Program for the Hearing Impaired to develop and implement strategies that promote effective mainstreaming of selected preschool hearing-impaired children, ages 2 to 5 years old.

The project was funded through a federal grant from the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program, United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

Very young hearing-impaired children need opportunities that allow them to learn and play while interacting with their hearing peers. Mainstreaming your child, especially in a structured setting, aids language development and provides important peer models.

Mainstreaming also helps a hearing-impaired child develop cognitive and social skills. Providing this opportunity at the earliest possible age, can give your child a chance to develop and grow in the hearing world.

How the Model Program Works...

The Project CHIME model program can be adapted in a variety of early educational or structured settings, but the program is based at the preschool of Nassau BOCES Program for the Hearing-Impaired. When your child participates in the CHIME program, he or she will attend a mainstream program two or more mornings each week for sessions lasting from one-and-one-half to three hours depending upon needs and abilities. The rest of his or her school day will be spent at the BOCES program.

All the resources of Nassau BOCES Program for the Hearing Impaired are available to children who participate in Project CHIME.

Training for Parents...

As a parent of a child enrolled in the CHIME program, you will receive extensive training to help you understand your child's development and his or her needs, especially in realtion to the hearing world.

You will learn how to work with your child at home so that the mainstreaming experience will be most beneficial for you and your child. You are expected to participate with your child in the program by attending parent workshops and by working with your child at home.

The Role of CHIME Staff...

The staff of Project CHIME includes a teacher-trainer, psychologist, and audiologist, and a project coordinator. All have been trained as educational professionals who work with the hearing impaired.

The CHIME staff provides training and technical assistance for the staff of the early education program where your child is mainstreamed. This assures that the mainstreaming program will be prepared to provide the best experience for you child. If any questions should develop during the time your child spends at this program, CHIME staff members are available to meet and discuss answers.

Preparing for CHIME...

Before a child enters the CHIME program, he or she is screened by an interdisciplinary team including a psychologist, audiologist, teacher-trainer and the child's classroom teacher. Several tests are administered including the

.TAC-L, a test of the auditory comprehension of language,
. LAP a test of learning,
. SKI-HI Receptive Langauge test
. Project CHIME Preschool Behavior Checklist

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Once you have given your approval for your child to enter the CHIME program, his or her Individual Education Plan (IEP) will include the mainstreaming experience as a goal. Remember you as the parent are involved in all aspects of the development and assessment of your child's educational goals and in the selection of a mainstreaming site.

A conference is held weekly by the Project CHIME staff on each child participating in the program to assure that the experience is proving beneficial. You may be assured that the Project CHIME experience will be most helpful for both you and your child. The Project CHIME staff are available to meet with you at any time if you have any concerns about the program or your child's progress..

Your Responsibilities as a Parent of a Mainstreamed Child...

Your support as the parent, is one of the most important factors in assuring a successful mainstreaming experience for your child. Parental support includes cooperating and communicating with BOCES and the regular school personnel throughout the CHIME experience. It also means providing additional support in the areas of speech and language development when necessary.

Part of the Team...

You must become a part of the team that works with your child, open to the input of the professionals involved and willing to be a contributor to the total effort. Your coopertaion will enhance the education of your child.

Whenever an issue is raised by you or by one of the professionals who works with your child, it must be addressed by both of you together so that all the viewpoints involved can be considered.

Remember your child's right to an education is protected under PL 94-142, and that law and other legislation makes you a most important part of all the descisions that are made in regard to his or her education.

Choosing a Mainstream Site...

Once your child is accepted for Project CHIME, your first responsibility is to advise the team of educators and other specialists involved in the program of your choice of a preschool that will provide an appropriate educational setting for your child. It is important that you first set up an appointment to visit the preschools that you consider best suited to your child's needs.

At the time of each visit, you should notice the physcial setup of the school. Is it very noisy and/or dark? Will conditions such as these make it impossible for your hearing-impaired child to use his or her residual hearing or receive auditory or visual clues.

The availability of a program near your home should also be considered as an important factor in finding a suitable preschool. You will be responsible for your child's transportation to the mainstream program although arrangements can be made if this is impossible.

If you can, you should sit down with the director of each program you visit to discuss your child, particularly his or her hearing loss and past educational setting. It would be beneficial to also share your philosophy concerning oral education and your goals for your child's educational future.

Hopefully, you will find two preschool programs that meet the needs of your child. When you have decided on them, you should inform the coordinator of the CHIME project. In turn, he will investigate both the programs that you feel suit your child and, using the criteria established by the project, you and the coordinator mutually decide on the one that can provide the best overall mainstreaming experience for your child.

After Placement...

Once placement has been determined, you should begin the process of application required by the preschool mainstream program. When this is complete, discuss your child's hearing loss and his or her needs with the classroom teacher and any of the mainstream program's special education staff that will be working with your child.

Generally, your child should be able to follow any reasonable program planned for his or her age group. Be open about your child's strengths and needs but don't expect the school to provide support that is beyond the limits of mainstreaming.

It is important for the mainstream classroom teacher to think about managing your hearing impaired child in his or her classroom. However, it is not your job as a parent to teach this teacher everything you have learned about deafness, speech, and language development.

Topics including the advantages and disadvantages of hearing aids, use of auditory trainers, oralism, and classroom techniques to maximize your child's mainstreaming experience should be discussed as the need arises.

Working with the Classroom Teacher...

Remember, the classroom teacher in your child's mainstreaming program is not a trained teacher of hearing impaired children and cannot be expected to absorb all this new information about hearing loss immediately.

Be patient. The teacher does not have expertise in this area and may need time and factual information to make him or her comfortable as your child's new teacher.

Following through...

While your child participates in CHIME, you will be expected to attend parent workshops. Topics for this year meetings are included with your handbook. These workshops will give you the chance to learn more about your child's education, the role you must play as parent and the expectations for the future. They will also give you the opportunity to meet with other parents and to share experiences.

Remember also as your child is involved in the mainstream experience, the staff of Project CHIME is available to meet with you as any concern might arise. They will be familiar with your child's adjustment and progress and, therefore, can provide the answers you may need.

It should be noted at this time that not every child placed through Project CHIME will suceed in a mainstream experience. Sometimes the child, although assessed as being ready, does not assimulate in the mainstream. The experience may become too stressful for some children.

Other children because of the time spent in mainstreaming may fail to maintain sufficient progress in speech and language. They may require benefits of more intensive programing specifically designed to address these skills.

The Project CHIME staff and parents should remaain flexible about mainstreaming. If it is not proving beneficial then the child should be withdrawn. Perhaps in another year, the child will be ready and the result will be a most successful experience rather than one that could negative rather than positive effects.

Beyond Preschool...

Preschool is one of the beginning steps in your child's education. Although a successful mainstreaming experience at this level is a positive step, you must realize that your child will need many years of special work in language, speech, and auditory training.

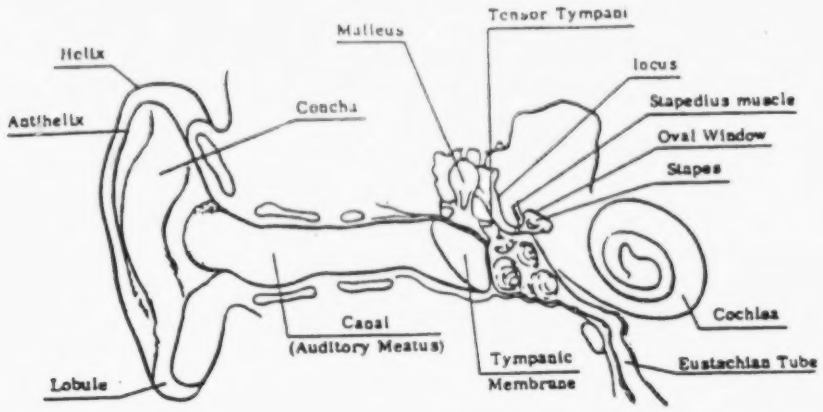
A good preschool experience enhances language development for the child but it is not a substitute for specific language training. It may be necessary for other agencies or professionals to provide support services for your child outside the preschool setting. If this is the case, you as the parent should coordinate the efforts of the participating agencies. This insures that appropriate services and communication occur between the specialists and the school so that your child receives the most appropriate educational program available.

HEARING LOSS

There is some basic information about hearing loss that parents of hearing-impaired preschoolers should know. Much of this information may already be familiar to you but it is useful to have as you approach the mainstreaming experience.

Types of Hearing Loss

Hearing loss occurs when there is some damage to the ear. To understand the types of hearing loss that exist, it is necessary to understand the anatomy and physiology of the ear.



Sound travels into the ear canal and sets the ear drum into motion. The ear drum then sets the three bones (the incus, mallues and stapes) into motion. The last bone the stapes, then pushes against the oval membrane on the cochlea where sound waves from the middle ear are transformed into electrical energy which is transmitted via the eight auditory nerve to the brain where the information is interpreted as sound.

A hearing loss occurs when there is some damage to the system. The place where damage occurs will dictate the type of hearing loss the child will exhibit.

Conductive Hearing Loss...

If the damage occurs some place between the ear canal and the stapes, the child is said to have a middle or outer ear problem and will have a conductive hearing loss.

Sensori-neural Hearing Loss...

If the damage occurs somewhere in the cochlea or eigth auditory nerve, the child is said to have a sensori-neural hearing loss.

Mixed Hearing Loss...

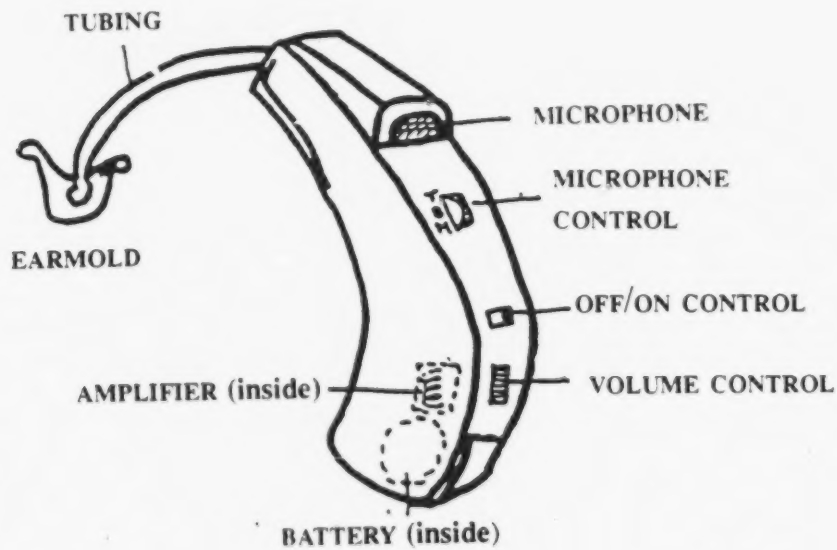
If the damage occurs in both the middle/outer ear and the inner ear, then a mixed loss is said to exist.

Most problems that occur in the outer or middle ear are medically or surgically treatable. Damage that occurs in the inner ear is usually not medically treatable and the sole means of treatment calls for the child to be fitted with a hearing aid.

THE HEARING AID

Another topic that the parent of a mainstreamed preschooler should know about is the hearing aid. Simply, a hearing aid is an instrument that makes sound louder. However, hearing aids do not make hearing normal. The type of hearing aid used depends upon the severity and type of hearing loss it is used to correct.

The hearing aid works as a minature amplication system. It has a microphone to pick up sound, an amplifier to make the impulses stronger, and a receiver to convert the electrical impulses back into sound waves.



Most Hearing Aids Have the Following

. a **battery compartment** to hold the battery that provides the power for the hearing aid

. a **volume control** to change the amont of amplication as needed

. a **M control** (microphone) turns the hearing aid on for regular use

. an **O control** turns the hearing aid

. a **T control** is found on some hearing aid to be used with the telephone or an auditory trainer

. a **M/T switch** is a combination that is used with an auditory trainer

THE AUDITORY TRAINER

Since your child wears an auditory trainer at BOCES, you probably are familiar with its function but a review of the trainer is included here for your general information as you approach the mainstreaming experience.

When hearing aids increase the volune of speech sounds, they also increase the volume of all sounds in the child's environment. This can make listening a difficult task for the child especially in a noisy environment.

An auditory trainer attempts to eliminate this problem by delivering a speaker's voice (usually the teacher's who is wearing a transmitter) at a consistent and appropriate level. The child wears a receiver that amplifies the sound of the teacher's voice but does not amplify the environmental sounds in the classroom.

The child wearing an auditory trainer will hear the teacher's voice as if he or she were standing three feet away, no matter where the teacher is in the classroom.

Children in the Program for the Hearing Impaired wear auditory trainers in their BOCES classrooms. Through Project CHIME and the training that is provided by the staff, the mainstream teacher learns to use and auditory trainer and the child can also wear this device in regular school. This makes the mainstream experience even more beneficial for the child.

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